

Appendix B

How to Create a Climate of Safety and Convey Support for Children and Youth

According to the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), LGBTQ and gender non-conforming children and youth are at a higher risk for:

A. Emotional or physical abuse from their family members.

B. Failed out-of-home placements.

C. Institutional neglect or abuse than their heterosexual counterparts.

Psychologically, LGBTQ and gender non-conforming children and youth are at substantially greater risk than their heterosexual counterparts for:

A. Suicide attempts.

B. Runaway behavior.

C. Homelessness.

D. Substance abuse.

E. Emotional and physical victimization

F. High-risk sexual behaviors.

G. Pregnancy.

H. More likely to withdraw from or miss school due to fear, intimidation, or threats from other students.

LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth often assess situations and people to determine and predict their safety and/or potential threats. Staff can share about their experiences as an ally or being supportive of someone (other children or youth, a parent, sibling, friend, neighbor, etc.) who is LGBTQ or gender non-conforming while maintaining professional boundaries. Such disclosure may help to normalize the prevalence and experiences of LGBTQ individuals in the broader community.

- A. Know that your tone of voice and non-verbal behavior will have an impact on a child or youth's perception of your authenticity in supporting them.
- B. Empathize with individuals when they are considering disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- C. Assure the child or youth that you understand the need for confidentiality and explain how the Child and Family Services' Practice Guidelines support the child or youth's right to participate in decision-making. This includes how information regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be shared, including clarification for exceptions to confidentiality that are based on keeping the child or youth safe.

Preferred Name and Pronouns

As part of their disclosure, many children and youth will want to practice names and pronouns within safe places before disclosing to parents, extended family, and friends. Keep in mind the identity of a child or youth is fluid. Name and pronoun preferences may shift over time. Staff will check in regularly with children and youth regarding their preferred name and pronouns.

- A. Which name would you prefer for me to use when I call your (family, teacher, counselor, etc.)?
- B. Which gender pronoun should I use for you when I call your (family, teacher, counselor, etc.)?
- C. When I call your (family, teacher, counselor, etc.), would you prefer that I use your legal name or your preferred name?